

Congregational Meeting
Minutes
November 15, 2015

1) Presentation of 2016 budget (see budget & narrative attached)

Jen gave a description of how the Finance Ministry builds our budget.

Roger shared about his proposal for an Art and Mennonite Theology event, bringing in an exhibit and artist this spring, the cost of which would be \$700. It was built into the budget as follows: \$400 designated to Outreach and \$360 Speakers.) His intent was that we pursue this if we had the funds. He'd now like to withdraw the proposal since he sees how this negatively impacts the budget – specifically that giving to MCC and Mennonite Mission Network was reduced to zero, in part to cover the cost of the visiting artist.

Finance Ministry explained that the line for MCC is for blanket support. We would still be able to give through special offerings for specific MCC projects (a specific disaster, school kits, etc.). Part of the decision to cut these funds was because, of all those to whom we give, MCC has the broadest base of support and would therefore be the least impacted.

Retreat Committee explained the reason for the increase in retreat budget for an outside speaker (Jeff Raught of Ted & Co.). This is a one-time thing, gives all of us a chance to enjoy the retreat, and the hope is that what we learn from Jeff will impact our worship and interpretation of scripture longer term.

Several people expressed concern that we keep MCC in our budget, that the priorities we set for giving be kept as they have been. MCC is core to what we believe in. Several people also very much want to see us still find a way to fund the Art and Theology exhibit. Many expressed willingness to increase giving to keep all these things in the 2016 budget.

The following proposal was made and accepted: To add \$1,250 for MCC and \$500 to Mennonite Mission Network and also keep the visiting artist in the budget. To approve a budget of \$74,750 with understanding that pledges will be increased to cover the increase in spending.

Chrissie mentioned that there is nothing in our current budget to indicate a clear commitment to our city. Others expressed gratitude for her bringing this up. Leadership Team will discuss how we address this. Where is our outreach? Finance Ministry members acknowledged that we could use the \$400 in outreach for local projects and fund visiting artist through additional giving, given that we've heard a commitment to both of these things, if a decision was made to pursue a particular initiative involving our city.

2) Proposed Amendment to Safe Ministry Policy

Kathy proposes: In lieu of spending for additional background checks, we could meet the goal of this amendment by allowing applicants to be in the room with the person ordering the background check. The applicant could be the first to see their own background check on the computer screen or, if being present at that time wasn't possible, could request a copy and to be

viewed prior to our fellowship's representative viewing. This would save us money and streamline the process. On the consent form, would indicate this wording. "I would like to view my background check prior to review by the Sunday School Coordinator/Administrator. I understand that if I check this box, I will be contacted before my background check to make these arrangements."

We moved not to approve the first amendment as written. The second question is problematic for several people. Suggestions were made such as, "In working with children have you ever had a difficult experience that would seem to be important to share with us" "Has anyone ever expressed concern . . ." "Have you ever been a part of a controversy involving . . ." (Note: these items are in the minutes to help Leadership Team in crafting a new sentence).

A proposal was approved to include the amendments in principle, trusting that Leadership Team has heard the concerns and will address them in the final wording. Leadership Team is empowered to amend that second question to reflect our concern for safety of children and sensitivity to the applicant, to include both specificity and transparency in the interview process. The Sunday School Coordinator and any other interested parties will see the final wording before they become permanent amendments to the policy.

A proposal was made to amend page 5 of the policy to state that "major" (vs "all") changes to policy will be brought for congregational approval. **That will be placed on the agenda for the January meeting.**

3) Administrator update

A congregational review is scheduled for 9 months after the start of the position. This means we will most likely have this review at the May meeting. Thoughts and concerns can be brought to the Administrator or Leadership Team at any time.

From time to time, people ask the Administrator to include announcements about things going on in the community or invitations to personal events. At times this can make for a VERY long mid-week email, long enough that it may be cumbersome to read. For this reason, the Administrator will prioritize fellowship-related items in the mid-week announcements and will forward other announcements separately. Also, everyone is reminded that anyone can send out a church-wide email message themselves. These do not have to go through the Administrator.

4) Proposal from Wendy and Tsegaye

Tsegaye has already begun a Saturday tutoring/mentoring program for 13-15 students from the Ethiopian community. He has several African volunteers from the U of R participating. . (The currently meet from 2-4pm on Saturdays at another location). Nothing specific proposed other than that we allow them to use our building. Wendy asks us to be thinking and praying about this and would like a few people to join her in coming up with a proposal to bring to congregation in January. Issues raised: cleaning of the church by volunteers squeezing it into their lives, and most often happening on Fridays or on Saturday mornings, liability, scheduling, and whether we'd need to do background checks. Judy agreed to help Wendy with this. Others can contact Wendy this week.

5) Ministry Reports:

Worship Team – They encourage people to sign up for Advent and Epiphany; We'll have a Christmas Eve service; Caroling is happening on Sunday, December 20 at the Babcocks.

Pastoral – Nothing to report, but asks that we let them know if we have suggestions for special offerings

Stewards - The Stewards are preparing to finish out the fall season and looking ahead to winter. We hope that there will be no issues with water this winter. If anyone notices issues with the building, please bring it to our attention so that we can remedy the situation as quickly as possible. We hope to have a 'notes to stewards' board up soon where people can leave us notes about things found in the building that need repair.

Education –

Looking ahead at the schedule, we are planning series on:

- Prophecy and Advent, Old Testament scriptures that pointed to advent and Christ,
- Getting to know you, hearing the personal stories
- Discipleship: The Forgotten Ways (with thoughts from Alan Hirsch's book)
- The Art of Leading Worship
- Prayer

We have been experimenting with the conference room for the Adult Hour discussions. It is smaller, perhaps too small, but it doesn't force people out of the conversations they are having in the sanctuary after worship. Should we go back to meeting in the sanctuary? Please share your thoughts on **location** with us.

About half of the adults choose not to participate in Adult Hour. Some important conversations are taking place outside the planned discussion, and that is holy time for our community. However, we wonder if there is a desire to have an alternative gathering to meet other needs for Christian formation during this time. We are looking for your thoughts and ideas about this in the next few weeks.